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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: BI-WEEKLY REPORT AUGUST 07 2006

The following reports compiled over the last two weeks illustrate the variety of economic, political and social developments occurring in Ethiopia.

#### Charge' Hosted a Meeting of Women Entrepreneurs Group

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¶1. On July 21, Ambassador Huddleston hosted a meeting of the Women Entrepreneurs Group, a newly formed group of leading local women entrepreneurs, government officials, members of parliament, and representatives from civil society, international organizations, and diplomatic missions. The group, which has met twice under the US Embassy's auspices, is aimed at addressing constraints currently faced by women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, serving as a networking forum, and empowering Ethiopian women and girls through community outreach. At the July 21 meeting, the group agreed to form two sub-committees, which will focus on community outreach and economic empowerment. Each group will be chaired by an Ethiopian participant and develop activities. Initial suggested activities include identifying policy gaps that constrain women entrepreneurs, and the documentation/dissemination of stories of successful women entrepreneurs as a tool for motivating young girls.

¶2. The Women Entrepreneurs Group builds on on-going efforts by post to assist women entrepreneurs overcome challenges such as a lack of capacity and access to credit. These efforts include export support services to individual women-owned companies, an internet training program, a loan-guarantee program targeted for small and medium-sized businesses, and support to the Addis Ababa Women Entrepreneurs Association. In addition, post has actively supported women exporters take greater advantage of AGOA. For example, several women-owned companies have recently begun to export under AGOA's Category 9 provision, with assistance from USAID. Women entrepreneurs are also playing a lead role in Ethiopia's booming cut-flower export sector.

#### Demolition of Illegally Built Mosque Triggers Demonstration

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¶3. On July 24, Addis Ababa City Administration demolished an illegally built mosque in the Arat Kilo neighborhood in Addis Ababa. Hundreds of angry Muslims from the neighborhood took out to the street chanting "demolition of a mosque is an attack on the religion" and demanded that the demolition must stop. Addis Ababa Administration says that the property is owned by a private citizen and is registered as a residence. Officials of the administration argue that special permits are required to construct religious institutions and residents of Arat Kilo do not have permits. The demonstrators threw rocks at the Federal Police deployed to control the crowd. Undisclosed numbers of rock throwers are under police custody pending investigation. The

Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council is concerned with the development and is working with officials of Addis Ababa Administration to resolve the issue. The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia allows citizens to practice their faith and the government generally respects this. In this case, the mosque was in a private home and action was taken when the owner began construction to turn the house into a mosque.

#### More Federal Judges to be Appointed

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¶4. The Judicial Administrative Council will propose the appointment of 30 federal judges for the new Ethiopian year starting September 11. The appointment of judges is an ongoing court administration reform project geared towards increasing manpower. Federal First Instance Court President, Desalegne Berhe says that currently there are 109 federal judges serving in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. However, a number of judges leave their profession for different reasons and there is a pressing need for the appointment of new judges. Desalegne said the Council's plan to appoint 20 judges last year did not materialize. However, the Council will press for the appointment of 30 more judges. The Federal First Instance Courts were able to reduce backlog files by more than 10,000 as a result of a campaign carried out this summer. In the past two years several reform packages had been carried out and now are providing more efficient services to the public.

#### Consular Visa Sanction Update

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¶5. The consular section delivered to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of DHS, the latest list of potential

returnees ordered removed from the United States to Ethiopia. This list contains 8 new cases and 8 resubmitted cases with additional information. Post continues to urge the Ethiopian government to accept back its citizens in order to avoid the imposition of visa sanctions.

#### New USAID Director Meets Senior Officials, Visits South

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¶6. Recently arrived USAID Director, Glenn Anders, had introductory meetings with Ministers of Health, Education, Agriculture and Trade as well as with Deputy Prime Minister Addisu Legesse and Prime Minister Meles (see SEPTTEL about latter). Minister of Health Tedros emphasized the importance of USAID in health reforms: programs in management and leadership training, community health systems, reproductive health and HIV-AIDS control. Minister of Education stressed improving the quality of primary education through teacher training, strengthening schools' management, and basic courses in math, English and civics, and thanked USAID for assistance through its BESO program. DPM Addisu Legesse emphasized the development of a commodity exchange and rural enterprise to transition safety net recipients and avoid dependency. He expressed concern over high grain prices due apparently to crop diversification.

¶7. Director Anders also made a several day field trip to Oromia and southern regions to meet regional officials and to review USAID programs in health, education, and food aid/safety net. The impacts of the substantial USAID programs involved in southern states were evident in health systems and teacher training. Regional officials emphasized importance of U.S. assistance programs in teachers training at Awassa College and in building a code of health extension workers and community health volunteers appeared effective. PEPFAR programs, outreach/prevention, and testing/treatment in the so-called "high-risk corridor," between Addis and Djibouti appeared to be making process.